



Indian Summer*

Noel Wyatt

As the blood red sun began to sink, a silhouette broke the painted scene. It approached the Apache Reservation roaring like the Father Wind on a winter day. The beast seemed to shout its name above its own voice; across its shiny hood "Lincoln" defied any opponent.

With expert ability Bill maneuvered the whale-like car through the gates of the reservation. Mil (short for Mildred) swung around to swat her two children, Sheila and little Bill.

"For Godssake, you two. Shaddup."

"But we want to see the Injuns," cried little Bill.

"Just keep yer mouth shut and you'll see 'em." She confronted her husband. "Do ya think it was a good idea ta bring the kids here to see . . . these . . . ah . . . people?" She looked warily around.

"Why not?" questioned Bill. He rubbed his hand through his thick blond hair, then slammed it on the steering wheel. "Look! This is no time to have second thoughts! Just sit back and enjoy the view."

"Okay, but I heard they was still kinda savage. You know, wear no clothes or nothin'."

As the four aliens looked out their portholes, a blur of shacks confronted them. There were only a few people about, but those that came out to fight the heat seemed to be one color: gray. The faces looked old and many had cracked wrinkles that resembled cracked red clay. Small black eyes peered from beneath rough cowboy hats, scarves, or bonnets. A couple of children, naked to the waist, threw a ball against the weathered wall of a building. They stopped their play to watch the long sleek car make its way down the dirt road.

"God, they look dirty!" exclaimed Mil. "Their parents oughtta be reported! I said no matter how poor I got, *my* kids 'd be clean!" She promptly lit a cigarette with her diamond-studded lighter.

The car stopped in front of a building that was larger and in better condition than the others. "Government-Owned Trading Post" was hand lettered on a sign above the building.

"Let's go in and get some souvenirs," said Bill. "The kids can stretch their legs and get outta my hair a little, too."

As they got out, Mill excitedly said, "I wonder if they have any of those pillows that say where they're from, like 'Niagra Falls.' I'd love to get one for Mom." She gingerly mounted the stairs.

As they entered, the first thing they saw was a small boy wearing nothing but some dirty underwear and peering at the candy display. Mil quickly slapped her hand over her little girl's eyes. She nudged her husband and said, "What'd I tell ya? No clothes!"

The family browsed around the store, poking and pushing the hand-made items. There were fine woven blankets, hand-strung beads, leather goods and original paintings. All the items were made at the craft center back of the store.

"Most of it's junk, I think," stated Bill.

"Yeah, but I think we oughtta buy some beads just to be nice," said Mil.

"Okay, buy all ya want. I'll be in the car. It's so hot, it'll take forever to get the air-conditioning going."

As they passed through the gate, a slight young man weaving down the road raised the bottle he was holding and hurled it at the car. It just missed the windshield and crashed against a rock.

"You drunken idiot!" shouted Bill. In a fit of anger he had rolled down his window. "Who the hell ya think ya are?"

"I'm . . . thah son of Geronimo," shouted the man.

Bill rolled up his window as if to stifle the man. "Yeah, I know what you're a son of!"

"Let's get outta here, Bill," cried Mil. "They're savages, all savages!"

As the blood red sun was sinking, the silhouette drove towards it as if to pierce it. Father Wind blew a cloud of red dust after it, as if to make sure it was gone.